IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 2, line 16, as follows:

In general, a metal silicide or germanide may be selectively etched by converting the metal silicide or germanide into a metal silicate or ~~germinate~~ germanate. This may be done by oxidizing the metal-silicon/germanium bond to form the silicate or ~~germinate~~ germanate. The metal-to-silicide bond is relatively weak compared to silicon-to-oxygen or metal-to-oxygen bonds. Hence, oxidation of the metal-to-silicon bond is energetically favored, given the correct oxidation conditions. The correct oxidation conditions may include, in some embodiments, the use of an aqueous solution of hydrogen peroxide, organic peroxides, gaseous oxygen, or ozone, to mention a few examples. Such treatments oxidize neutral metals and bare silicon to their respective oxides. Also, in some embodiments, extreme oxidation conditions may yield products including silicon dioxide and non-discernable metal species. The intermediate silicon species can be isolated and exploited.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 3, line 8, as follows:

Thus, in some embodiments of the present invention, the silicide or germanide is first converted to a silicate or ~~germinate~~ germanate and then the silicate or ~~germinate~~ germanate is selectively etched away. In other embodiments, the removal and the conversion to silicate or ~~germinate~~ germanate may occur simultaneously in a one-step process.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 4, line 1, as follows:

The structure shown in Figure 1 may be exposed to a mild oxidant, such as hydrogen peroxide or R_2O_2 (where R is an organic material), O_3 in vapor or gas form, or O_2 in gaseous form. The oxidation converts the germanide or silicide 16 into the ~~germinate~~ germanate or silicate 16a as indicated in Figure 2. Next, the ~~germinate~~ germanate or silicate 16a may be selectively etched using a non-destructive, low pH wet etchant, such as H_3PO_4, sulfuric acid, chelating species, or supercritical carbon dioxide at lower temperatures such as 25 to 120°C. In one embodiment, the wafers may be immersed in a bath of liquid etchant. These etchants have high selectivity and work by dissolution. This results in the selective removal of the silicide 16a.